



Testimony of  
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Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee  
March 8, 2022

***HB 5300 An Act Requiring Legislative Approval for the Merger or Closing of Institutions Within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Prohibiting the Consolidation of Regional Community-Technical Colleges***

Good afternoon Senator Slap, Representative Elliott and members of the Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Ed Hawthorne, and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 200,000 workers in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 5300 An Act Requiring Legislative Approval for the Merger or Closing of Institutions Within the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Prohibiting the Consolidation of Regional Community-Technical Colleges

The proposed consolidation of the Connecticut Community Colleges is a two-pronged approach to (1) consolidate services used across all twelve colleges and (2) merge into one single accredited institution with twelve branches. The consolidation was proposed to save money, but the only savings realized to date have come from staff reduction by attrition, which also adversely impacts services for students. Vacancies are left unfilled at campuses across the state for mental health counselors, veterans coordinators, and career services staff.

So called "shared services" are also negatively impacting existing personnel. Contracts for adjunct faculty and educational assistants have not been issued in a timely manner, employees have experienced problems getting paid and basic human resource questions have been left unanswered. At the same time, the Board of Regents is building an administrative layer to oversee college operations separate from the CSCU System Office. This is in direct contradiction to cost saving measures enacted by Governor Malloy. Every dollar spent on these new administrators reduces the investments we make in our students.

While the Board of Regents has operational and managerial control of Connecticut's publicly funded colleges and state universities, it is an appointed body. Proposals to close or merge campuses or whole institutions will greatly affect students, employees, workforce development efforts and state and local economies. Decisions like these should not be made exclusively by politically appointed officials who operate in a myopic bubble with little or no accountability to taxpayers.

The General Assembly used to have oversight of mergers and closures of higher education institutions. HB 5300 restores that control. Elected members of the legislature are in tune with the needs of their constituents and also have a broader view of the state's needs, long-term vision, planning and budgeting.

Legislators have the context to understand how a proposed merger or closure will impact the state overall, not just the Board of Regents' balance sheet.

HB 5300 also prohibits the Board of Regents from consolidating regional community-technical colleges through any regional accrediting association like they have pursued for the community colleges. We should learn from what has transpired there and make sure it doesn't happen to our community-technical colleges.

We urge the Committee to support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.